

leaders to fuel the campaign, particularly in organizing the citizens of the city into proactive units ready for whatever unrest might arise from their plans. Once the campaign was in full swing, some of the activities of the Secret Nine and Group Six apparently merged with the official Democratic Party, the White Government Union and the Red Shirts.¹⁷

The county Democratic Committee organized itself to provide a framework for the development of the White Government Unions and the Red Shirts. Spokes of the Democratic wheel included the chamber of commerce, churches, the Wilmington Light Infantry, the Merchant's Association, and a host of other civic and fraternal organizations.¹⁸ Pulling these disparate organizations together were a handful of closely connected men who all shared similar backgrounds, political desires, and social savvy. These men also followed the strategy of Simmons in finding men who could write, speak, and ride.

Just as Simmons used printed media to further the statewide campaign, Wilmington's newspapers joined in the fight. Following themes of black "insolence," ineffective city government, corrupt and unqualified police and judges, and dangers to the purity of white women and girls by black "brutes," the papers published and reprinted accounts of black disrespect.¹⁹ As the campaign progressed,

Wilmington editors increasingly filled their columns with instances of black on white violence and ineffective responses to that violence by city government. Front page coverage of national news and politics declined, and headlines such as "White Supremacy," "Russell's Deviltry," "Republican White Elephant," and "The Negroized East" became standard fare.²⁰ Although the papers had reported criminal cases and arrests of blacks before the election campaign, these normally trivial topics gained importance in the pages of the *Wilmington Messenger*, *Evening Dispatch*, and *Morning Star*, providing printed fuel for the white supremacy firestorm. Following the lead of Josephus Daniels in Raleigh, Wilmington papers invited correspondents from throughout the state and nation to visit their city. Whenever those reporters visited, they were treated as royalty, enjoying unfettered access to white leaders, their homes, and participation in all aspects of the campaign, even being escorted through town in Red Shirt parades.²¹ After reading the papers, many Wilmington residents were on edge and ready for the impending doom spelled out in their papers.

Again, following Simmons' example, local Wilmington Democrats brought a host of speakers to the city throughout the campaign. Not only did these individuals present orations to large crowds at rallies and at spots such as Thalian Hall, they also spoke to smaller groups as they stood outside Democratic Party headquarters, in the homes of prominent

¹⁷ Hayden, *WLI*, 66-70; George Rountree, "Memorandum."

¹⁸ *Wilmington Messenger*, November 2, 1898; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), October 8, 1898.

¹⁹ Sidewalk encounters in which white women were in perceived danger from black "insolents," male and female, peppered the papers. For more on the print campaign, see Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 52-55, McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 574-575, 602-605; Shelia Smith McKoy, *When Whites Riot: Writing Race and Violence in American and South African Cultures* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 42; Andrea M. Kirshenbaum, "Race, Gender and Riot: The Wilmington, North Carolina

White Supremacy Campaign of 1898," (master's thesis, Duke University, 1996), chapter 3.

²⁰ *Morning Star* (Wilmington), October 25, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, October 21, 1898, October 29, 1898.

²¹ Henry Litchfield West of the *Washington Post* and P. R. Noel of the *Richmond Times* were escorted through town during a parade and seated among dignitaries at speeches. *Wilmington Messenger*, November 4, 1898.